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ABSTRACT

This book offers a unique and thorough look at the lives of 73 men and women in their 50s who were asked to reflect and comment on a variety of life issues. Chapter 1 explores the invisibility of the 50s, differing perspectives of men and women, why new myths are needed to give oneself form and meaning, and why one must think in terms of reinventing oneself. Chapters 2-5 focus on ways in which the interviewees struggle with and find fulfillment within themselves. Focus is on examining one's self-image, changing priorities, emerging inner life, and potential for a new vitality. Particular attention is paid to similarities and differences in the ways men and women see themselves. Other topics are the popular culture that shaped childhood and adolescent expectations and the massive cultural shifts that both tested and reshaped those expectations. Chapters 6 and 7 turn to relationships with others, including the search for both community and autonomy and for new ways of relating to spouses and lovers, grown children and aging parents, and children's children. Chapters 8-10 focus on ways in which men and women find or fail to find fulfillment in the external community. Chapter 11 challenges those in this age group to explore themselves deeply to search for a more authentic self. Chapter 12 is the authors' open letter to those approaching their 50s that presents four key messages: be ready for challenges and high activity levels, have sufficient support, act on growing interest in generative activities, and replace current concerns with emerging concerns. Appendixes include the interview questions, 41 recommended readings, chapter notes, and index. (YLB)

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